

The Karta River system is a high use recreation area. This area is centrally located on the west side of Prince of Wales Island at the head of Kasaan Bay. Within a watershed of approximately 41,000 acres in size, ^(see map) there is one river, Karta River, two major tributaries, McGilvrey and Anderson Creeks, and two lakes, Salmon and Karta. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has requested that since 1961 ^{or left as a "natural"} the Karta River be studied by the USFS for inclusion into a dispersed recreation area.

Presently the area is roadless. Towns and villages that lie within 40 miles of this system are Klawock (~~pop. 220~~), Kasaan (~~pop. 31~~⁹³), Craig (~~pop. 490~~), Hollis (~~pop. 2~~), Thorne Bay (~~pop. 450~~), Ketchikan (~~pop. 11,000~~), Loring (~~pop. 10~~), and Hydaburg (~~pop. 291~~). Within this circle, there are approximately ~~12,480~~⁹³ people.

The Karta River system was the most favored recreation area in the South Tongass National Forest during 1975. Travel to the area is either by float airplane or boat. Airplanes can land at each of the four USFS recreation cabins while a boat can only be used for saltwater travel to Karta Bay cabin.

The Karta River is approximately 2.0 miles in length. The river area is covered with second growth spruce and hemlock due to a forest fire around the turn of the century. Throughout its course, its banks are populated by an open-canopy spruce-hemlock forest with a moderate understory of alders and berry bushes. The downstream section follows through low hills to the tidal flats of Karta Bay. ^π An excellent USFS trail system extends from saltwater into the system for approximately 6.6 miles. The trail ends on the north shore of Salmon Lake at the Salmon Lake cabin. The USGS map indicates a trail system extending from saltwater to about two miles up Anderson Creek. The trail area above ^v the Salmon Lake cabin has not been maintained.

The Forest Service has strategically located cabins at McGilvrey Creek, the northern shore of Salmon Lake, at the outlet of Karta Lake, and at the mouth of the Karta River. Such locationing helps provide shelter in proximity to good fishing spots and helps to utilize the Karta system as a unit.

Due to the high recreational use in this watershed, cabin reservations should be made in advance through the U.S. Forest Service office in Ketchikan. There is a \$5.00 per day cabin fee required. A cabin is not officially reserved until the monies are received. The USFS cabins are of panabode structure with a wood stove. Firewood is provided at each cabin. There are four stacked wood frame bunks that can sleep six people. The two lower bunks are double width while the upper bunks are singles.

Boats are provided for public recreation at Karta Lake and McGilvrey Creek cabins. Each boat is a 12 foot open aluminum skiff. Maximum capacity is three or four adults. No outboard motor larger than 18 hp should be used on these skiffs. ^π There is no boat mooring buoy in Karta Bay for the visitor wishing to travel to Karta River by pleasure craft. The river mouth can be reached by boat at all tide stages. Large boats can anchor off the shelf out from the river mouth in deeper water. Smaller pleasure crafts can anchor in the hole off the river mouth. The inner Karta Bay area is fairly well protected from winds due to the large trees surrounding the bay.

Karta River watershed recreation is many faceted - sport fishing, trail and alpine hiking, canoeing, boating, photography, nature watching, trapping and hunting. The most important aspect is that one can relax in the area and still feel the true outdoor experience.

If it is ^{sc} sport fishing you crave or desire, this system can provide the avid angler with the anticipated success. Anglers from all over the United States come to fish for trout and salmon in this drainage. Species available are red, pink, chum and coho salmon plus Dolly Varden, cutthroat trout and rainbow trout not to mention steelhead. Fishing starts during the spring thaw and continues until freeze-up. ^{Vardens} ~~Salmon~~ clams can be collected from the tide flats in Karta Bay.

Karta River is paralleled its entire length by trail which provides access to all the fishing areas. The first $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of river from the Salmon Lake outlet is a series of small falls and rapids. At the base of the last major rapids, there is a large pool. From this pool downstream excellent fishing is available in season for all fish species. One of the biggest attractions in the main river is the spring-run of steelhead. Steelhead fishing starts around the first of April and continues until mid-June. Steelhead range from 6-18 pounds. During this time, Dolly Varden may be taken in the upper river areas. Later during early June and through July red salmon are passing through the river and lakes on their spawning run to McGilvrey and Anderson Creeks. Red salmon may be caught where they are found schooling or holding in pools on coho streamers and smaller black flies.

From the red salmon migration until after the coho spawning period, Dolly Varden and cutthroat trout can be taken from the river. The pink and chum salmon enter Karta River during late July and early August. Pinks can be caught with silvery spoons or spinners and chum on coho streamer flies. There is an early run of coho salmon passing through the river in July which are migrating to Anderson Creek. These coho are smaller in size than the later run to the main river and other tributary streams.

Karta Lake is 210 acres in size and a shallower body of water than Salmon Lake. The ^UUSFS Karta Lake cabin sits near the lake outlet. The greater percentage of surface water is covered by lily pads. The north shore of Karta Lake has an excellent USFS trail. Fishing from the lake shore could be difficult due to the numerous lily pads. Fishing from the USFS boat can provide good fishing success from the lake for cutthroat and Dolly Varden. Areas to concentrate ones efforts on are near the inlet and outlet plus off all the tributary stream mouths.

Karta Lake has one major tributary, Flagstaff Creek. This is a small glacial stream draining from Granite Mountain into the lower lake area on the south shore. In this streams head waters, there is the Flagstaff gold mine which operated from 1931-1941. This is a side attraction that can be reached by foot along an old overgrown road system.

Salmon Lake is the larger (1255¹/₂ acres) of the two lakes and most noted for its fishing. The northern shore can be walked via a Forest Service trail extending from the outlet to Anderson Creek. The water close to the lake shore is deep enough to allow spin casting. The mouths of Anderson and McGilvrey Creeks provide good cutthroat and Dolly Varden fishing. The outlet area of Salmon Lake is another good fishing area.

A boat can travel from the outlet of Salmon Lake through the interconnecting stream and into Karta Lake. Interconnecting stream water levels may vary and at times of low water, one may have to wade the boat through the shallows. Good fishing can also be expected in the interconnecting stream.

From this lake, one can look westward and see Pin Peak (elevation 3866 ft.) of the Klawock Mountain Range. This range of mountains is considered one of the more scenic areas on Prince of Wales Island.

McGilvrey Creek is one of the best sockeye (red) salmon producers on Prince of Wales Island. Fish start appearing at the stream mouth in early July and numbers continue to build until late August when they start entering the stream to spawn. While off the mouth they will strike coho flies and ~~lures~~ lures during this schooling and developing time period.

In the early spring during May, cutthroat trout are spawning off the mouth of this creek. Fishing for both cutthroat and Dolly Varden during this period are good - especially late in the evening and early in the morning.

Anderson Creek is another major tributary entering at the head of Salmon Lake. This stream has a small population of red salmon spawning in the lower creek areas. Some sport fishing for these fish takes place off the creek mouth. Cutthroat and Dolly Varden may be taken throughout the Creek and in the small headwater lakes. Rainbow trout can be caught in the lower areas of the creek.

Approximately one mile upstream from the creek mouth there is a velocity block to all salmon but coho salmon. The coho salmon return to this stream in July. These fish appeared to have adapted to the partial velocity block since they are smaller in size than the normal coho (4-6 pounds versus 6-15+). They also return earlier, apparently to pass over the high velocity rapids during low flows. When coho are in the hole below the rapids, excellent fishing can be expected for them and trout species.

